

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING Wednesday 21st September 2016

Agenda and notes (where appropriate) can be viewed at the Council's website at:

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/living/designandconservation/designreviewpanel.htm>

Panel Members Present:

- Councillor John Bowcott (Chair)
- Marcus Beale
- Tim Day
- John Fyfield
- Jon Herbert
- Sir Duncan Michael
- Tony Michael
- Sally Warren
- Michael Whitwell

Council Officers Present:

- Paul Garrett
- Nuala Kennedy
- Paul McGarry

Notes:

Item 1: Pre-Application, No Application No. Yet, **Merton Hall**, 78 Kingston Road, South Wimbledon

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential

Item 2: Application, 16/P2942, **Wellington House**, 60-68 Wimbledon Hill Road, Wimbledon

The Panel were clear that the proposal as it stands does represent an improvement on the current building. However, this reason alone was not considered sufficient to grant consent on design grounds. The conservation area character and gateway location of the site also needed to be better taken into account.

The Panel noted that at its previous review it had recommended removing the top storey as it seemed too high for its location and in relation to other buildings, and that this floor had not been removed in the current design. Whilst it was acknowledged there had been some alterations to the upper storeys mass and appearance, the

plant room was still prominent and the darker colours proposed made the top of the building seem too heavy.

The Panel were concerned that the approach to scale, bulk and massing was to assume it was similar to the built and successful Mansel Court and that this would be okay. This was not considered a valid argument by the Panel as that site was clearly different in many respects. The design needed to look to good nearby buildings in more detail to develop design cues and build on the generally good analytical work already done.

The building is essentially 3 storeys higher than the adjacent building and the Panel felt that, despite the changes, the transition in height was not successful and could probably not be managed successfully within the building itself, and that their opinion that a storey should be removed was still valid. It was felt that this fundamental aspect had to be resolved and that a high quality frontage would not atone for this.

The building is located at a point where the suburban feel of Wimbledon Village gives way to the urban feel of the town centre. It was considered to mark this transition with an urban building, but that it simply needed to make the gateway statement more positive. This could be done in many ways with alterations to the curved corner – which itself was a positive element. One suggestion was that the corner element alone could support an additional storey as a landmark – similar to a cupola. Another suggestion was to work closely with an artist to generate creative ideas for the corner to make it distinctive.

In terms of the general design and appearance of the building, the Panel felt that it had a number of good qualities, notably the attention to detail with the brickwork, which was picking up on some local distinctiveness. There were other issues however, that did not work well. The brick colour was considered too dark and uniform, rather than the warmer brick and terracotta used on the former bank building opposite. It was felt that the infilling of the gap in the Mansell Road frontage needed to be managed sensitively in order for it not to be overbearing in the street scene.

There was also some discord felt with respect to the vertical and horizontal elements. These seemed too uniform, reminiscent of industrial warehouse buildings, and therefore made the building seem more at home in Clerkenwell rather than Wimbledon. As the building was a re-clad, it was felt important to retain vertical separation between the bays at ground floor to reflect the rhythm of adjacent shops.

This uniform feel led the Panel to suggest that different floors of the building should have subtly different elevational treatment. This would add interest, as well as dilute the uniformity without compromising the overall design, for which there was a degree of support. It was also noted that the ground floor seemed too squat and that this was probably due to inaccurate and inconsistent CGI images. This led to the request for elevational drawings of the whole façade to show the building properly in context and scale.

The Panel felt that, although there had been some changes, they considered them relatively minor. The key element of the bulk and mass of the building had not been

addressed, despite being raised at a previous review. The Panel were also disappointed that the generally good quality appearance of the building had not been further developed to make it better relate to adjacent buildings and ensure the design was finer grained and more appropriate for Wimbledon.

VERDICT: **RED**

Item 3: Pre-Pre-Application, No Application Numbers, **Eastfields Masterplan**, South Wimbledon

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential

Item 4: Pre-Pre-Application, No Application Numbers, **Ravensbury Masterplan**, South Wimbledon

Pre-Application – Notes Confidential